

90
The LIVING TEMPLE.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT
HALSTEAD IN ESSEX,
MAY the 10th, 1791.

ON OCCASION OF

The Death of the Rev. JOSEPH FIELD,
who departed this Life, May the 3d, 1791,
Aged 67 Years.

By ROBERT STEVENSON.

Published at the Request of the Congregation.

Ye are the Temple of the Living God.

ST. PAUL.

L O N D O N:

Printed for C. DILLY, in the POULTRY;
Sold by Mr. CLACHAR, Chelmsford; Mr. SMYTHEMAN,
Braintree; Mr. CHEVELEY, Castle-Hedingham; Mr.
HILL, Ballingdon; and Mrs. FIELD, Halstead.

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J. E. M. D. O. M. E. J.

A
S E R M O N, &c.

ZECHARIAH, iv. 7.

HE SHALL BRING FORTH THE HEAD-STONE WITH
SHOUTINGS, CRYING, "GRACE, GRACE UNTO
"IT!"

NONE of the spectacles that were ever exhibited to the world appear so grand, or so interesting, as that spiritual building which God has been carrying on through the successive ages of time. The fabric of this universe affords a bright display of his wonderful perfections. The scheme of divine providence, by which he governs, directs, and over-rules all things, is in every respect worthy of him, and affords a delightful theme for gratitude, that the Lord God

omnipotent reigneth. But the building of grace, which this great Architect has been rearing up, deserves a louder, and more rapturous song of praise, because this stupendous design has for its object the minds of men, and is calculated to form them to, and improve them in knowledge, goodness, and true happiness. We see something of this structure now, and in it we see enough to admire and praise; but, O Christians, what a sight of it shall we have in the regions of bliss, when the head-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it!"

These words were given me by our excellent friend now departed, with a particular desire, that I would improve them upon the present occasion, they having for many years been a source of great consolation to his mind. Before I enter upon them in the manner in which I intend to treat them, and in which, I am persuaded, it was his wish to have them discoursed upon, it will be proper that I should explain to you their primary design and meaning.

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The sacred history informs us that that magnificent temple, which was erected at Jerusalem by Solomon, was entirely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, when he carried the Jews into the country of the Chaldeans. Seventy years did they continue in this state of bondage, according to the prediction of Jeremiah; and, upon the expiration of this term, they were emancipated by Cyrus, king of Persia, as the instrument of God's goodness to them. Upon their return to their own land, one of the first things of which they were desirous, was to rebuild the temple of their God. Being very liberal in their contributions to defray the expences of it, and being assisted by royal munificence, they soon began to lay the foundations of the second temple. Zerubabel was appointed the governor over them, and Joshua was the high priest upon their return from their captivity, who were both very zealous in promoting this great work. They had not proceeded far, before they met with considerable obstructions from the Samaritans, who from various causes did all they could to oppose them. However,

in the reign of Darius II. the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were sent to encourage them to persevere in erecting that sacred edifice; and in the verse where our text is, it is shewn, in the bold style of oriental imagery and personification, that all the mountains of difficulty should be removed, and that they should complete the building with the greatest demonstrations of joy. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubabel, thou shalt become a plain, and he shall bring forth the head-stone with shoutings, crying, " Grace, grace unto it !"

From the finishing of this earthly temple, the serious mind will naturally turn to the completion of that spiritual temple, consisting of the whole * company of the redeemed,

* It is well known that the most elegant writers of antiquity have many fine passages, in which they represent a virtuous mind as the *temple of God*, and in which they speak in the highest and strongest terms of the obligations men are under to keep his temples inviolate and unpolluted. The justly celebrated Philo compares the family of Abraham to a *temple*. Rabbi Alscheck on Haggai, ii. says, that the nation of Israel are called the *temple of God*: upon which Grotius, one of the most elegant scholars of his age, thus remarks,

deemed, which is begun, carried on, and finished by divine grace. Of this temple the apostle speaks, when he says, ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Of the building of this temple he informs us, viz. that it is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord. When therefore *this building* shall be completed, the head-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying, " Grace, grace unto it !"

We shall in the first place enquire into the cause there will be for these acclama-

remarks, " Multo iustius vero Christiani, & singuli, & collecti, ob spiritum Dei in ipsis habitantem;" i. e. If the Jews were called the temple of God, with much more propriety may Christians be so denominated, both in their individual, and *collective* capacities, on account of the Spirit of God dwelling in them.

GROT. in 1 Cor. iii. 16.

tions,

tions, when the spiritual temple will be completed.

It will then be natural to consider by whom this triumphant language will be used, " Grace, grace unto it !"

After this, in the third place, the principles from which these acclamations will proceed will solicit our regard.

I. The cause which there will be for these acclamations, when the spiritual temple will be completed, is the first subject of our enquiry.

Could I speak upon this delightful theme with some portion of that spirit, and with something of that unction which we hope to experience in the world of immortality, it would, I trust, have a very sensible influence upon this assembly, and excite many of you to join in this song of salvation, " Grace, grace unto it !"

You will observe that the repetition of the word, " Grace, grace," gives a very powerful energy to the thought, and clearly implies that the whole of the building is to be ascribed to grace: and when Grace, grace shall be the triumphant shout when
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the head-stone of this spiritual building shall be laid, it very plainly intimates, that all the other parts of it are of grace too. I shall, therefore, endeavour to shew that the foundation, the superstructure, and the completion of this building, are all of grace.

1. The *foundation* of this building is entirely of grace.

To direct you to the commencement of this wonderful structure, we must look back to years beyond the flood, to ages beyond the very creation of all things. Before these blue heavens were spread abroad; before the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, upon the foundations of this world being laid; *before* this, were the foundations of that building laid, of which I am speaking. In this assertion we are supported by an apostolic authority, which declares that God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. The basis, then, of this grand edifice was laid in the unmerited love of God to a lost world, according to the declaration of him who was in the bosom of the Father, and who hath declared him unto

us. It is his own assertion, that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. In speaking of the foundations of this building, we must observe with peculiar gratitude, the rich grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in so freely consenting to be made a little lower than the angels, to take upon him our nature, and to bring in everlasting redemption for us. Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich.—Were not the foundations of this building, then, laid in grace?

2. The *superstructure* of this building is entirely of grace.

Before I enter upon the subject of the necessity of divine influences in the superstructure of this building, I beg that it may be observed, and that this remark may be carried through the whole of this discourse, that I speak only of such an “*agency of God*” on our minds, as offers *no violence* to the rational and active nature

nature which God has given us, nor does by any means *supersede* our obligation to *those duties* which his word requires; but, on the contrary, cures and perfects our nature, and *disposes the soul* to such incumbent *duties*, and strengthens it in the discharge of them."

By the superstructure, I mean that part of the building which is carried on in time, in the conversion of sinners, in the support of the Christian life, in the various dispensations of Providence, in the public institutions of the Gospel, and in the circumstances which attend the righteous in their departure out of this world.

The conversion of sinners is entirely a work of grace. It is not every stone that is proper to compose and to adorn some noble structure; nor is it every person that is fit to form a part of this spiritual temple. The unregenerate sinner could no more unite here, than the iron and the clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image: they must be, therefore, living * stones,

* λίθοι ζῶντες. 1 Pet. ii. 5.

to be built up a spiritual house, and form a living temple. A spiritual life must be infused into them: but who is sufficient for these things? We may very justly apply the words of our prophet to this spiritual building, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. No power, less than that which formed the human heart, can change it; no influence, less than that which commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into the benighted mind; nor can any voice, less powerful than that which will awake the dead, call to spiritual life those that are dead in trespasses and sins.

If we consider what is done in supporting the Christian life, it will be further manifest that it is of grace. It requires no less energy to carry on, than to begin the spiritual life. Every day that our natural lives are supported, it is by the exertion of a divine power: for were God, only for a moment, to withhold his supporting agency, we should sink into the dust, as a building would when its foundations were removed. In like manner, every
day

day that our spiritual lives are maintained, it can only be by the arm of Omnipotence. To this the apostle Peter bears his testimony, when he says, that we are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. And when we consider the Christian's enemies, both within and without; when we advert to his own weakness and insufficiency; when we think of the snares and dangers to which he is exposed, in a world full of temptation, we shall have the greatest reason to say, that the progress of the Christian in his course is all of grace. It is through the grace which is contained in the promises, it is through the influence which is communicated by the Holy Spirit, it is owing to the hopes which the Christian receives from the bright prospect of immortality before him, that he is enabled to hold on his way, and to lift up his head. Here again we may cry, "Grace, grace!"

There is grace in the dispensations of Divine Providence: for there is not a single circumstance that ever befalls a good man, from the first moment of his life to the

the final issue of it, but is ordered and regulated by the wisdom, the love, and the grace of a father. If the very hairs of our heads are all numbered, if a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his notice, if the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air are provided for by him, much more must his providence be interested for them, who are of more value than many sparrows. It is not in one single instance, or a few, that his kindness and love are observable, but in all; for we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Could we survey the whole plan of his providence, could we observe every distinct link in this chain, with all its connections and dependencies, we should have the most striking proofs of consummate wisdom and perfect love. All are designed to subserve the best interests of their souls; his blessings, to draw them with the cords of love and the bands of a man; his afflictions (blessings still!), to wean them from this present world, to fill them with the deepest
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humility, to increase their faith and patience, and to promote in them a meetness and desire for that rest which remaineth to the people of God. This affords fresh reason to join in this acclamation, " Grace, grace !"

The public institutions of the Gospel, which have been so much blessed, not only for fixing the most indelible impressions upon the thoughtless mind, but for improving the Christian in every excellent disposition, are also of grace. It can be much better conceived than described, what great strength, what increasing knowledge, what strong consolations the good man has received through these channels. When he has been drawing water out of these wells of salvation, he has rejoiced as one that findeth great spoil ; when he has seen the fullness and the grace of some precious promise opened, it has filled him with a joy unspeakable and full of glory ; when he has heard some important duty explained and enforced, it has quickened him in the path that leadeth to immortality ; when some of the important privileges
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of the Gospel have been delineated, it has made him to triumph in the goodness of God's house, even of his holy temple : in a word, when the purity, the glories, the unmingled felicity of the heavenly state have been unfolded before the eye of faith, it has enabled him to bear, with greater fortitude, the sorrows of this vale of tears, and he has been ready to cry out with good old Simeon, " Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

In the circumstances which attend the saint in his departure out of this world, there is also much of divine grace to be seen. When a good man draws nigh to the gates of death, with a holy tranquillity and a good hope through grace, with something of a foretaste and " longing after immortality," how does all this magnify and exalt the grace of God ! It shews what a kind, what a gracious master he is whom the Christian serves, when thus at evening time it shall be light ; a calm evening, which is the prelude to that bright morning which shall arise without a cloud, that
morn-

morning which will usher in the day of eternity.—And when the faithful servants of God do not die with all these consolations, still they all die safely; and experience, in some degree, that, whilst they are walking through the dark valley, his rod and his strength do support and comfort them. Here again we may join with our prophet, in crying, “Grace, grace unto it!”

3. The *completion* of this building will be entirely of grace.

This consummation will not be until we shall obtain the full and final victory over death in the last great day; for this victory is part of that salvation which the Gospel promises: but then, when the resurrection to eternal life shall proclaim this conquest, when all the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; when they shall thus be collected into one vast, glorious, intellectual society; and when they shall be put into the full possession of that kingdom, which was prepared for them *before the foundation*

of the world; then will this wonderful building be fully completed, then will this spiritual temple have received its greatest ornaments, then will the labours of the God of grace, through a series of ages, be crowned with the fullest success, and then will the head-stone be brought forth with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it *!"

II. The second thing, in our proposed plan, was to consider by whom this triumphant language will be used.

In our text, Zerubbabel is represented as putting on the top-stone, the last, the finishing stone to the building of the temple, and all the immense multitude of the people that were then present, and

* This doctrine of divine influences appears not only confirmed by Scripture, but seems consonant to the unbiassed sense of mankind, and is supported by the greatest masters of reason in the Heathen world. Cicero says, No man ever was truly great, but by a certain *divine afflatus*; "Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino." De Nat. deor. ii. sub fine.—Seneca observes, No mind ever became virtuous, without *divine assistance*; "Nulla sine Deo mens bona est." Epist. 73.—And Socrates, that great light of antiquity, is introduced by his disciple Plato, as saying, that "wherever virtue is introduced, it appears to us to be in consequence of a *divine dispensation*." *Θεία μοῖρα ἡμῶν φανταὶ παραγυνομένη ἡ ἀρετή, οἷς παραγυγνέται.* Plat. Menon. ad finem.

were

were spectators of this interesting scene, with a burst of rapture, corresponding to the warm glow of gratitude in their hearts, upon seeing their wishes and prayers through many tedious years crowned with success, cry out, "Grace, grace unto it!"

But the triumph and the joy upon the completion of the spiritual temple will be far more transporting, and expressed by an infinitely greater multitude; by the innumerable company of the redeemed, by the glorious society of angels, and it may be, by intelligent beings in other worlds, whose united voices will be as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

1. The whole multitude of the redeemed, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, will join in the triumphs of that happy day, and in the burden of that song, "Grace, grace unto it!"

In this they will all unite with the fullest harmony. There will be no disunion in their souls, no discordant note in their songs. Not

one, amidst all the countless myriads of glorified saints, will boast of his own merits; but he that glorieth will glory alone in the Lord. "Not unto us, O Lord," will they all say, "not unto us, but unto thy name, be all the praise and glory!" And when we reflect that these happy persons are those that are principally interested in this salvation; what a loud, loud shout will they give to the riches of divine grace. We read of the shoutings after vintage, of the shoutings after victory, and of the shoutings after harvest; and all of them demonstrations of great joy; but none of them, in any respect, to be compared with the acclamations, in the last day, of "Grace, grace unto it."

2. The glorious company of the angels will join in this triumphant language, "Grace, grace unto it."

These blessed spirits are no indifferent spectators of the wonders of creation, of providence, and of grace. They were present at the formation of this world; they have been frequently employed by God in carrying on the designs of his providence; and they are represented as searching into,

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as stooping down * to contemplate the displays of divine wisdom and goodness which are manifested in the gospel. When our Lord came into this world, these benevolent spirits testified their joy, by praising God, and singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men:" and can we suppose that they will take no interest in the completion of his kingdom, in the head-stone of the spiritual temple being brought forth, and in the maturity and perfection of the divine purposes of love and grace? Though their interest in it will not be near so great as ours, yet they will join in these shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it!" We know that there is joy amongst the angels in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth, and that they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who are the heirs of sal-

* επιθυμῶσιν αγγελοι παρακυψαι, 1 Pet. i. 12. which appears to be a beautiful allusion to the golden cherubim looking towards the mercy-seat: And it may denote, as Mr. *Blackwall* observes, not only the *attentive curiosity*, with which they may enquire into the gospel, but the *humility of their adoration*. SACRED CLASSICS, vol. i. p. 431.

vation.

vation. If, then, they thus rejoice at the conversion of one sinner, if they now take pleasure in having the charge of the sons of God, what, may we not suppose, will their joy be at the complete salvation of myriads, and myriads; of an innumerable multitude rescued from vice, from misery and destruction, and raised to purity, life, and immortal felicity! Though they have not sinned as we have, yet they have the same God, the same father, the same portion, and the same joy: and though they are our elder brethren, yet they will rejoice in having us, the younger members of the family, to be fellow-heirs, and fellow-partakers with them of the same kingdom and glory.

3. The intelligent inhabitants of other worlds may * perhaps unite in these joyful acclamations.

That there are innumerable other worlds, must be obvious to all that are

* The candid reader will observe, that this idea is mentioned only hypothetically, and even that with great diffidence: and he is left at full liberty entirely to reject it, if he please.

acquainted with the system of the universe; and it seems not an irrational thought, that the wonderful display of the perfections of God, in the salvation of men, which have been exhibited upon this little theatre, may be communicated to them. The destiny of a superior order of beings, *viz.* the fallen angels, we have been acquainted with; and should the knowledge of the future condition of mankind be imparted to other beings, what pealing anthems of praise will arise from them to the great Lord of all!

I see their altars smoke, their incense rise,
And hear *Hosannas* ring through every sphere*.

The tremendous justice of God, in the punishment of the finally wicked, we may naturally suppose will strike them with awe, as the punishment of the spirits of darkness ought to affect us; and, should they see the discoveries of the rich grace of God manifested to the heirs of immor-

* Dr. Young.

tality,

talities, in the foundation, in the superstructure, and in the completion of the spiritual temple being entirely of grace, they will join in the triumphant plaudit, " Grace, grace unto it !"

And while they will unite in this song, to which the angels will tune their golden harps, the company of prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, will fill up the universal chorus of " Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

III. Let us now attend to the principles from which these acclamations proceed.

1. From the deepest humility.

Humility is now one of the brightest ornaments, and characteristics of the disciple of Jesus. In this respect he is conformed unto him, who, in a most superior degree, was meek and lowly in heart. How much will this temper be promoted when the sons of God survey the whole plan of his government, when they will observe how wisely, how kindly every thing was ordered, and when they will

discover peculiar instances of his grace unto themselves ; they will then see that the whole of the praise ought to be given to him ; and, thinking themselves to be nothing, to be less than nothing and vanity, they will most humbly cry out, “ Grace, grace ! ”

2. From the sincerest gratitude.

Had they been only common benefits, the Christian would have most gratefully received them ; but when he considers, as he does now, and will especially in the final completion of this temple, that he has received not only common, but peculiar benefits, not only providential, but spiritual mercies, not only temporal, but eternal blessings ; when he reflects that for all that he has received, for all that he will then enjoy, and for the sure hopes he will have of innumerable blessings through a boundless eternity ; that for all these he is indebted to infinite goodness, his high, expanding, throbbing breast will be almost ready to burst with the strong and powerful emotions of gratitude, and he will cry out, “ O what shall I render ? ” and all

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the vast assembly join in sounding forth his praises, who hath called them out of darkness into this marvellous, this glorious light.

3. From the most fervent joy.

We read of the faithful servants of God having, even in this world, a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, of their being filled with all joy in believing, and also of their being presented faultless before God in the last day with exceeding joy. The joy which we have from believing the gospel, and from the prospect of immortality, however delightful it is, is not quite pure and unfullied, because we have many sources of sorrow whilst we are here; but in yonder better world, when the head-stone of our salvation shall be laid, when these shoutings shall be uttered, it will be with the most fervent, with the most unmingled joy.

That I may apply the subject of this discourse to the present occasion, I would
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lead you to observe how very much it was exemplified in the experience of our valuable friend, as a christian, as a minister, and in the consolations he received in his last illness.

In his private character as a Christian, he was indebted to this grace for the first serious impressions which were made upon his mind, and for that portion of the spirit of Christ which was conspicuous in him. It is not from any motive so mean, as that of offering a vain incense to his memory, that I speak these things, but merely to the honour of that God, by whose grace he was what he was, and who deposited the treasure of his gospel into the earthen vessel of his servant, that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of man. It must have been noticed by the most superficial observer, that in a very eminent manner he possessed the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. This rendered his conversation pleasing as a friend ; and this also enabled him to bear up under those heavy and repeated trials, with

which he was exercised, to the credit of that religion which he professed.

No less was the influence of divine grace displayed in his ministerial capacity. It is for thirty-six years that he has been labouring among you; and you are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably he behaved himself among you that believe: as you know how he exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, even as a father doth his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory. It was this influence which rendered his ministry so successful among you, and made it mighty to the pulling down the strong-holds in the sinner's heart; so that Satan fell as lightning from heaven. To the same power it is to be ascribed, that he was made useful in the edification of the body of Christ, in knowledge, in grace, and in spiritual consolation.

How powerful the same energy was in the last illness, and in the departure of your faithful pastor, will, I hope, give you plea-

sure to hear. From the frequent opportunities I had of conversing with him, I can bear my humble, but cheerful testimony to that unclouded composure and serenity which he constantly enjoyed. No darkness, no doubts, no fearful apprehensions; but he had a happy assurance of that glory into which he is gone. Upon enquiring of him concerning the situation of his mind, and the prospects he had before him; he said, "I have no elevations, but I have a settled peace and tranquillity within. I know that the foundation upon which I have been building, and the gospel which I have been preaching, is able to support me, and I feel that it doth support me." Having observed to him, that it was an unspeakable mercy to experience the preciousness of Christ and his gospel in a time of health, but peculiarly so in his present situation; he replied, "That was the first text I preached upon, *To them that believe he is precious*: and I now find him to be so." He added, "Last night I thought that every breath would have
 " been

“ been my last ; yet I had no anxiety, but
 “ a calm indifference as to the event. All
 “ the riches in the world cannot purchase
 “ this.” And again, he said, “ I have
 “ been thinking what will be the first
 “ sight to a soul upon its departure from
 “ the body. To a wicked man, perhaps
 “ the spirits of darkness will first present
 “ themselves, to convey him to the pit of
 “ misery. But to a Christian, I think the
 “ holy angels will come to congratulate
 “ him, and to bear him on their wings
 “ to glory !” This serenity he enjoyed
 without the smallest alteration ; for the
 very last time that I saw him, I asked him,
 whether he still possessed the same conso-
 lations. “ Just the same,” he answered,
 “ just the same.”

As there was the greatest mercy in the
 supports he received in his affliction, so
 there was great goodness displayed in the
 manner of his death, which was at last
 sudden and easy, without a sigh or groan.
 He often used to mention the saying of
 the pious Mr. Wilcox, “ Sudden death is
 “ sudden glory to a Christian ;” and de-
 fired,

fired, if it were the will of God, that he might have a sudden and easy dismissal. Thus was he heard in this petition; thus did he finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus; and thus was an abundant entrance administered unto him into his Master's joy.

How mighty are these consolations to support the mourning family and friends! The well-grounded hopes you have of his present felicity, ought rather to excite you to congratulate the husband, the father, and the pastor, who has now gained the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. It will, I trust, be your concern that this dispensation may most effectually promote your best interests, and may animate you in the path of purity, that, being followers of him, who, we hope, is now inheriting the promises, you may at last enter into the same glory.

How great an honour was it to you who are the members of this church and congregation, to have been so long favoured with the labours of so faithful a servant
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of Christ. Remember him who had the rule over you, and who has often spoken the word of the Lord to you, whose faith follow, considering the end of his conversation. Reflect upon those duties which you owe to one another, that every one study the things which make for peace; and let it be your earnest supplication to the God of all grace, who sendeth unto his people pastors after his own heart, that he will graciously provide you with one who may be a burning and a shining light among you, and by whose ministrations you may come in, and go out, and find pasture.

What a warning voice is this to those who have remained impenitent under his awakening ministry! O consider that he has now gone and delivered in his account to him that sent him unto you, and said, "Lord, thou knowest how I have by the
 " space of many, many years ceased not to
 " warn every one of them night and day
 " with tears; and still numbers of them
 " will not hear." How should this awaken you to a sense of your danger before

fore it be too late; that though his life was not successful in making the happiest impressions upon your minds; at least, his death may; so that as he did not live, we may have reason, in this respect, to hope that he did not die in vain.

I cannot conclude without again endeavouring to impress your minds with the infinite importance of your not suffering this doctrine of divine influences to relax your attention to the duties of the gospel. This would be a most awful abuse of the truth, from which, as your faithful friend, I warn you. The only proper and generous effect it ought to have upon the hearer is, to excite him to consider his ways, to attend upon divine institutions, to be uniform in the discharge of the duties of life, and to be earnest in his addresses to heaven, encouraged by the hope that divine influences will not be withholden. Though the blessed God, whose operation we see throughout all nature, acts upon us, yet it is in a way most perfectly consistent with our rational powers, and not as if we were mere ma-

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chines. ' If any therefore say,' as a judicious writer observes, " I will *sit still* and " attempt nothing for my own recovery, " till God irresistibly compels me to it," he seems as like to perish as that man would be, who, seeing his house in flames about him, should not attempt to make his escape till he felt himself moved by a miracle.' No man could have a stronger sense of the importance of divine influences than St. Paul, yet he makes use of this as an argument to excite to the utmost vigour in the Christian life, " Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" and then he adds for the encouragement of the Christian, " It is God that worketh in you both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure."



THE END.

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